THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI): (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India has reported that a portion of first floor of the Madras Terrace Building, housing the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Ltd. at Tuticorin, had collapsed on 22-3-1986 causing injuries to 4 employees of the Bank. One injured employee later on succumbed to the injuries on way to the hospital.

(c) Officers of the Bank had inquired into the matter and found it to be a case of pure accident.

(d) According to the Reserve Bank of India, arrangements are being made by the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Ltd. to pay compensation to the next of kin of the deceased employee in accordance with the proceedings initiated by the Additional Commissioner for Workmen Compensation, Tirunelveli. The Bank has also reportedly borne the entire medical expenses of the injured employees.

News-item captioned "Clandestine import of coconut oil"

1115. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Clandestine import of coconut oil" which appeared in the Indian Express of the 22nd March, 1986; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER) (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Export of pepper to the United States

1116. SHRI M. S. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 900 tonnes of pepper exported to the United States in recent months was contaminated by some poisonous chemical during transit;

(b) if so, what are the names of the shippers and the exporters; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to fix the responsibility?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER): (a) to (c) According to information available with Government about 900 tonnes of pepper exported to the United States has been detained by the US authorities on the suspicion that it had been fumigated with the chemical Ethylene Dibromide (EDB). The use of EDB in edible articles is not permitted in the United States. It has not been conclusively established the alleged contamination took place during transt. Government have since banned the use of any fumigant containing EDB in Export consignments of pepper or in ships carrying such consignments.

Amendment of payment of Gratuity Act, 1972

1117. SHRI M. S. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Miniter of LABOUR be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question No. 969 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 4th March, 1986 and state whether Government have since taken any final decision for amending the payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 and if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): No, Sir. The proposal for amendment are yet to be finalised.

Import of oil for vanaspati

1118. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that to maintain uniformity in delivery cost throughout the country the STC is reimbursing frei-